

Message to Employees

Dear Colleagues:

Last July, the Agency and NATCA began contract negotiations, and it was my goal to reach a fully voluntary agreement replacing the one first signed in 1998. We worked very hard to achieve that goal, in fact, resolving most work rules with the union at the table. But after nine months of negotiation, including four weeks of federally supervised mediation, the financial gap between our proposal and NATCA's remained very wide, particularly as to new hire salaries, and could not realistically be closed. So, in accordance with our statute, we then forwarded the parties' final offers to Congress for its review and consideration.

As of June 5th, the 60-day period for Congress' review has ended. This means that under the law the FAA may begin putting its proposal into place, which we will do effective today. We will be phasing in the successor terms and conditions for the controller workforce over the next several months. During this time, we will be providing training for air traffic managers and supervisors as well as discussing the phase-in specifics with NATCA. In the interim, we will transition by using the pay and work rule provisions from the prior contract.

As I told the controllers in a message today, I understand that many of them will be disappointed at the outcome of the negotiations, but I have asked them to take a fresh look at the successor provisions on their own merit rather than how they were characterized during the heat of negotiations.

This outcome is not a matter of winning and losing. We have complete respect and admiration for the controller workforce, and for the work they do day in and day out to keep the NAS operating safely and efficiently. Our contract proposal was a matter of necessity based on controlling the growth of our operating expenses, restoring some measure of internal equity to the FAA workforce, and protecting the current controller workforce. I think we were able to meet all three objectives.

Implementing the successor provisions will be challenging, but I know we can count on everyone to make it as smooth and as expeditious as possible.

Marion C. Blakey